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Chairman: Mr. Wenaweser ..... (Liechtenstein)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 102: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/57/3, A/57/38 (Part I), A/57/125, A/57/129-E/2002/77, A/57/169, A/57/170, A/57/171, A/57/330 and Add.1, A/57/406, A/57/432, A/57/447)

Agenda item 103: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (*continued*) (A/57/3, A/57/286)

1. **Ms. Garcia** (Philippines), aligning herself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that a number of the challenges identified in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women and in 2000 on the occasion of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly had yet to be addressed, and that poverty eradication remained the main obstacle. In that regard, she noted that the Beijing Platform for Action recognized the contribution that women could make to poverty eradication and the need to ensure their empowerment.

2. Poverty eradication remained the central concern of her Government, and its framework plan for women 2001-2004, which focused on improving the economic situation of women, was closely linked to its poverty-reduction policy.

3. All forms of violence against women were a violation of their rights and dignity. The Philippines was pleased that 107 countries had signed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The economic and social exploitation of women and children was an endemic problem; it was gratifying that national, regional and international efforts had been made to redress it. Although measures adopted at the national level were welcome, there was an urgent need to strengthen bilateral, regional and international cooperation in dealing with the problem.

4. The partnerships forged by Governments with non-governmental organizations and other civil society actors might prove especially useful in improving the situation of women throughout the world. The success of the Asian Regional Initiative against Trafficking in Women and Children, which her Government had helped to organize in 2000, owed a great deal to such partnerships and to regional and international cooperation. The Philippines was also participating in the Asia-Europe Meeting, whose action plan to combat trafficking in persons, especially women and children, encompassed such issues as HIV/AIDS and the recovery, repatriation and reintegration of victims.

5. Her delegation planned to introduce a draft resolution on trafficking in women and girls, which it hoped would be adopted by consensus.

6. Lastly, she reiterated the firm commitment of her Government to the implementation of the decisions of the Fourth World Conference on Women and its follow-up process. Her Government was committed to continuing to integrate women into decision-making processes and to enhancing their contribution to national development.

7. **Ms. Elliott** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), joined with the statement made by Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and noted that the report of the Secretary-General on follow-up and progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/57/286) provided an important overview of the extent to which a gender perspective had permeated the work of the Organization.

8. The adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the reforms and actions taken on behalf of women, had helped to remove the legal, economic, social, political and cultural barriers inhibiting the full exercise of equal rights by both men and women. One of the particular successes of that process was the revamping of social constructs that might be considered natural or inevitable, but which were not. The Convention had provided for the regulation of private as well as public actions, had demonstrated that discrimination could be both unintentional and intentional, and had called on States to modify or abolish practices and customs that constituted discrimination against women.

9. In less than a quarter of a century, it had been universally recognized that positive changes in women's circumstances improved the social, economic and political situation of all. In order to realize the goal

of gender equality, resources must be reallocated, power relations must be altered and the structure of social relations must be fundamentally changed.

10. The member States of CARICOM remained fully committed to the goal of gender equality and were cognizant of the fundamental changes required for the realization of that goal. The fulfilment of the reporting obligations under the Convention ensured a dialogue with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and provided an opportunity to review national measures to improve the situation of women as well as the various complex factors which affected the status of women.

11. Since the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on gender issues, the CARICOM States had sought to address the problems, both persistent and emerging, which threatened equality, development and peace for women in the region. They had mainstreamed gender issues into their programmes and identified five priority areas: health, education, poverty, violence against women and political participation.

12. In the field of health, the overwhelming focus had been on HIV/AIDS, which was spreading rapidly in the Caribbean, in particular among women.

13. In terms of education, although the enrolment levels of girls exceeded those of boys, greater attention was being paid to equality of education, gender bias in educational materials and whether the educational system adequately prepared girls for the job market.

14. Violence against women, in particular domestic violence, remained a source of great concern and emphasis was being placed not only on the consequences of violence but also on its causes.

15. The CARICOM post-Beijing regional plan of action and the Caribbean subregional review and appraisal report on the implementation of the Beijing platform for action had highlighted the serious and multifaceted nature of the problem of poverty and its effect on women in the region.

16. In response, the CARICOM countries had implemented poverty alleviation programmes aimed at helping women fulfil their maternal role as well as acquire new skills. In that context the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) had undertaken an innovative project in four CARICOM countries to provide women with training in technical occupations.

17. The CARICOM countries welcomed the inclusion of a gender perspective in the major international conferences held in 2002, at which it had been recognized that although economic development did not automatically promote the advancement of women, appropriate policies could help women realize their full potential as equal partners in development.

18. Turning to the situation of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), located in the Dominican Republic, she said that the CARICOM countries, which, over the preceding three years, had demonstrated an active interest in the dire financial constraints facing the Institute, had been heartened by the work of the working group on the future operation of the Institute and fully supported that group's recommendations.

19. **Ms. Bakalem** (Algeria) said that since most of the world's poor were women and were the victims of differential treatment and inequality, exacerbated by their low level of education, restricted access to social services and resources and very limited participation in the decision-making process, it was essential to formulate development policies and strategies which would give them the means to improve their situation by meeting their specific needs.

20. Algerian women had always participated fully in society and occupied positions of responsibility in both the private and the public sectors. Five women were ministers.

21. As a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Algeria was working not only to implement its provisions but also to ensure their follow-up.

22. With a view to ensuring the harmonious development of society, in which women were both participants and beneficiaries, her Government was developing a wide-ranging national programme for economic renewal which accorded special emphasis to rural women. It had implemented measures in the area of training, promoted the creation of small enterprises through the granting of bank loans or subsidies and improved access to social services. In collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), her Government was also working to implement a gender equality strategy with a view in particular to mainstreaming gender issues into national

development policies and programmes. A national seminar bringing together all sectors and representatives of civil society had recently been organized in that context; its conclusions should lead to a better integration of women in all areas.

23. Her Government firmly believed that the participation of women in economic development and political and social life was not only essential for them to achieve their potential but was also vital for developing countries, which must avail themselves of every possible resource.

24. **Ms. Gunnarsdóttir** (Iceland) said that Iceland attached great importance to gender equality both at the national and the international levels. It had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, and appealed to all States which had not yet done so to do the same. It also urged States Parties to withdraw reservations which were incompatible with the objective and purpose of the Convention as soon as possible.

25. While much progress had been made in improving women's rights, the agreed objectives were far from being reached. Issues causing concern included widespread violence against women (and associated impunity), trafficking in women (a new form of slavery), severe restrictions on women's freedom of movement in some countries, low participation of women in political life and the fact that women were paid less than men everywhere in the world. The situation was worsened by a danger of backslash, particularly in connection with reproductive rights, despite the commitments made at the World Conference on Human Rights to recognize that the rights of women and the girl child were an inalienable, integral and indivisible component of universal human rights.

26. Her Government, along with non-governmental organizations, had taken many initiatives to combat violence against women, including rape. The capacity of the police had been strengthened, and the care of rape victims and their opportunities to seek redress had been improved. No less importantly, discussion of such issues had become more open and focused.

27. Iceland was working against trafficking in women through a common campaign conducted with the other Nordic countries and the Baltic States. The Icelandic campaign would aim to inform the public and increase its awareness of the issue, with a focus on reducing demand for sexual services. Iceland had signed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and expected to ratify it in 2003. A bill against trafficking in human beings would be put to the parliament during its current session.

28. The wage gap for women was one of the main issues under discussion in Icelandic society, since the principle of equal pay for equal work, recognized in Iceland for 40 years, had not fully materialized, despite the efforts of the Government and labour unions. It was hoped that the new legislation passed in 2000 to afford women and men equal rights to parental leave would help to resolve the matter.

29. At the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, Iceland had welcomed the decision by the Security Council to discuss the issue of women, peace and security. Her delegation hoped that the reports on that matter due to be presented to the Security Council in October 2002 would help accelerate the achievement of the objectives set forth in the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, devoted to women's issues, at which the international community had pledged to ensure and support the full participation of women at all levels of decision-making and implementation in peace processes, including post-conflict reconstruction.

30. **Ms. Dlamini** (Swaziland) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by Malawi on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the statement made by Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Swaziland remained committed to implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, succeeded by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, the Second World Assembly on Ageing and the United Nations Special Session on Children. Drafting of Swaziland's national constitution, which was in its final stages following wide consultation, had taken due account of those meetings. Funding from UNDP had paid for the services of an international consultant to ensure that the draft constitution included a gender perspective.

31. Her Government had recently developed a national policy on gender in collaboration with major stakeholders. The issues it addressed included equal participation of women in decision-making posts and political structures, and women's civil rights, including ownership of land and other property. Her Government had also embarked on a process of reform of the laws on marriage, which treated women as permanent minors, property registration and inheritance.

32. As a member of the SADC, Swaziland had signed the 1997 SADC Gender and Development Declaration, which included a programme of action for the advancement of women and gender equality. One of the Declaration's goals was to have at least 30 per cent of decision-making positions in SADC countries occupied by women by 2005. To that end, in August 2002 Swaziland had launched a national programme to encourage the public to vote for women candidates, with the aim of correcting the current imbalance.

33. Swaziland strongly condemned all forms of violence against women; in that context it had developed a work plan which was currently being implemented.

34. **Mr. Knyazhinskiy** (Russian Federation) drew attention to two causes for concern. The first was the politicization of discussions about women's rights, which were often used to settle scores or for political ends. The lack of progress in that area and the fact that, for the second year running, the Commission on the Status of Women had not been able to complete its work within the required time frame were regrettable. His delegation would like to see additional meeting time allocated to the Commission. The other cause for concern related to the overlapping of the work of the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women with regard to the consideration of repeated human rights violations. The Economic and Social Council had not been able to solve that problem. Moreover, resorting to the 1503 procedure to transmit certain information confidentially was not desirable and could lead to disagreements.

35. At its twenty-sixth session, held in January 2002, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had considered the fifth periodic report of the Russian Federation, which had begun to implement the Committee's recommendations. It had also set up a group responsible for reviewing the experts' recommendations and an information centre in Moscow. Moreover, women had been appointed to high-level posts, such as President of the Commission on Human Rights of the Russian Federation and Deputy Finance Minister responsible for budgetary issues.

36. **Ms. Cho** Jin-woo (Republic of Korea) emphasized that efforts for the advancement of women were being hindered by unresolved problems such as persistent conflicts, the volatility of the global economy, population ageing, poverty and HIV/AIDS. Her delegation was convinced, however, that the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly would continue to guide programmes designed to improve the status of women and build a more peaceful, just and humane world. Recalling the importance of cooperation among all the relevant actors, at both the governmental and non-governmental levels, she said that such cooperation could be made even more effective through the establishment of an institutionalized mechanism. In the Republic of Korea, the Ministry of Gender Equality was fulfilling that role.

37. The Republic of Korea welcomed the reports submitted to the Committee and strongly supported ongoing efforts to enhance gender balance among United Nations staff, including in important areas of work such as peacekeeping missions. At the national level, the measures taken by the Republic of Korea targeted two complementary areas: incorporation of a gender perspective into public policy-making and implementation and the increased participation of women in public life.

38. Following the 1985 Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, her Government had experimented with different kinds of national machinery designed to bring about the advancement of women in society. In 1988, a ministry without portfolio had been set up to coordinate policies affecting women; it had been replaced by the Presidential Commission on Women's Affairs in 1998. In 2001, a Ministry of Gender Equality had been created. That Ministry was still evolving.

39. **Mr. Yagob** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and recalled that women were the most affected by poverty, illiteracy, the refugee problem, violence and armed conflict.

40. With reference to the report of the Secretary-General on trafficking in women and girls (A/57/170), he said that the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was extremely concerned about the aggravation of that problem and hoped that the international community, in collaboration with the competent organs of the United Nations, would be able to accelerate the implementation of the relevant international and bilateral agreements. In addition, he welcomed the recommendations contained in the report of the working group on the future operations of INSTRAW (A/57/330) and hoped that the Institute would be able to play its role and would receive the funds necessary for its continued operation.

41. It was inevitable that many countries, in particular the developing and least developed ones, which were often African countries, would be unable to implement the Beijing Platform for Action without the help of the international community. The obstacles preventing them from doing so included the effects of globalization, a lack of financial resources and the debt burden. With regard to health, he noted that women were seriously affected by malaria and HIV/AIDS; it was regrettable that the commitments entered into by the international community had not been honoured.

42. It was important, when considering the situation of women, to bear in mind the murders of Palestinian women and girls and the deprivations they suffered; Israel was accountable in that regard before the international community.

43. At the national level, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had taken a number of measures intended to enable women to fully exercise their rights and to ensure gender equality. Women participated in the life of society, even at the highest level.

44. The best way to put an end to violations of women's fundamental rights was to respect cultural differences and to refrain from imposing the values of certain countries on the rest of the world.

45. **Ms. Maw** (Myanmar), having associated her delegation with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, deplored the scale of trafficking in persons in many countries. The multidimensional nature of the problem required a cooperative effort on the part of the international community; her Government was participating actively in that effort.

46. At the international level, Myanmar was a signatory to the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others and a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. At the regional level, Myanmar had taken part in the inter-agency project to combat trafficking in women and girls in the Mekong subregion. It also took part in important regional and bilateral meetings on trafficking. At the national level, Myanmar had enacted in 1993 a law on children, protecting them from exploitation and abuse and prohibiting their sale. In addition, broad sections of the Penal Code addressed the issue of trafficking in persons, and in 2001 the Supreme Court had issued a directive instructing the courts to hand down deterrent sentences commensurate with the seriousness of the crimes committed. Her Government had also conducted various activities to make public opinion more aware of such issues.

47. Another area of concern to her delegation was the issue of violence against women. On the basis of the Beijing Platform for Action, which had identified 12 areas to be addressed, the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs had identified eight areas that were directly applicable to the situation of women in Myanmar; education, health, the economy, violence against women, the situation of the girl child, culture, environment and the media. A report entitled "Licence to Rape" had been published by two anti-Government organizations based in a neighbouring country; the report contained serious accusations against Myanmar and her Government had therefore asked three independent national organizations to investigate the matter. The investigation had proved that the military units and individuals implicated in the report had not even been in the area where the rapes of which they were accused had taken place. The allegations were patently false and had been circulated with malicious intent.

48. As for the situation of human rights in Myanmar, the report of the Secretary-General unfortunately did not reflect the true situation. Myanmar had adopted and implemented various administrative, legislative and executive measures to ensure the elimination of forced labour in the country. Myanmar and the International Labour Organization (ILO) had signed an agreement under which a liaison officer had been appointed in Yangon on 4 September 2002.

49. Lastly, her Government had taken steps to implement the recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women following its consideration of the initial report of Myanmar.

50. **Ms. Davtyan** (Armenia) said that the promotion and protection of women's rights had long been among the priorities of the United Nations. The Millennium Summit had brought renewed attention to the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment, which were prerequisites for worldwide peace and prosperity. In a globalized world, the link between the advancement of women and social and economic progress was undeniable.

51. Despite some progress, women's rights were unfortunately not yet universally guaranteed and women still suffered discrimination. Only through concerted efforts by Governments and civil society would the gap between declaration and implementation be bridged.

52. Equal rights for men and women in Armenia had been established by law and further strengthened by the ratification of international agreements. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, having considered the second periodic report of Armenia, had commended the establishment of national machinery for the advancement of women. In May 2002, a decree of the Prime Minister had established the position of Deputy Minister for Women's Issues within the Ministry of Social Security, authorizing the holder of the post to coordinate all activities related to women's issues in different ministries and to collaborate with women's non-governmental organizations. In July 2002, a high-level commission had been established to develop a national programme and plan of action for the improvement of women's status and the enhancement of their role in society, and to facilitate its implementation.

53. In Armenia, gender problems were not so much legal as social. Stereotypes were deeply rooted and the activities of non-governmental organizations in raising public awareness had been crucial. Women were still underrepresented in political structures and decision-making positions, the majority of unemployed were women, there was a growing feminization of poverty and trafficking in women had become a major concern.

54. In order to reduce poverty, with due consideration to a gender perspective, her Government was working to improve governance, create employment opportunities, restore social services, promote entrepreneurship among women and set up microcredit programmes.

55. To combat trafficking in women, which often took place under the cover of labour migration, her Government had set up an inter-ministerial working group to elaborate the necessary legislative reforms and design concrete projects. In March 2002, it had also established a service for migrants which provided them with information on job opportunities and legislation in foreign countries.

56. Since the country's resources were insufficient, both technical and financial assistance from the international community was essential. Her Government highly appreciated the support provided by international organizations, particularly the United Nations system, and by donor countries and non-governmental organizations.

57. **Mr. Francis** (Jamaica), having endorsed the statements made by Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by Guyana on behalf of CARICOM said that although progress had been achieved at the national and international levels since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, numerous disparities remained between men and women in the areas of health, education, communications, employment and human rights. In view of the economic and social contribution made by women, policies that could remedy the social, economic and cultural disadvantages that they faced should be adopted as soon as possible. Peace and sustainable development would be threatened if women were not empowered to participate actively in the global economy and did not have access to information and communication technologies or economic resources. Member States should, therefore, give priority to economic, social and political reform and issues such as the feminization of poverty, the effects, of globalization, which were different for men and women, trade liberalization and external debt, the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the existing political and legal framework.

58. His Government had undertaken legal reforms in order to ensure the equal treatment of men and women and, notably, had modified the Domestic Violence Act and the Family Property Bill. It had also been actively engaged in improving the economic situation of women

by adopting poverty eradication strategies, promoting community empowerment and mobilization, establishing microcredit programmes and improving conditions for household workers.

59. Aware of the key role played by INSTRAW and concerned about the critical financial situation of the Institute, Jamaica welcomed the recommendations of the working group on the future operation of the Institute and called for concrete measures to be taken to revitalize it. Jamaica also welcomed the efforts expended by the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and other United Nations agencies to ensure that gender mainstreaming remained a priority.

60. **Ms. Dinçelek-Lettinga** (Netherlands), referring to agenda item 102, said that it was regrettable that the only perspectives taken into consideration in the analysis of the situation of women were economic and social welfare and the basic rights of women, since that was a restrictive approach. She called on the international community to adopt a new framework of thinking, based on diversity.

61. Women should no longer be considered solely as the beneficiaries of development projects but as equal partners; society should recognize their particular qualities. In order to do so, diversity should be viewed not as a problem but as an opportunity.

62. Referring to action that had been taken in her country in support of diversity, she cited the example of Mama Cash, an independent Netherlands funding organization for women's groups that contributed to improving the position of women worldwide; one of its primary objectives was to facilitate the access of female entrepreneurs to financial aid. She also referred to the system of grants given by her Government to black, migrant or refugee women's organizations.

63. At the international level, the participation of major groups — such as women, youth and indigenous peoples — in the work of the United Nations was a gratifying sign and proof that the importance of diversity was being recognized. All of these major groups formed an integral part of society and, as such, must be able to recognize themselves in general policies.

64. **Ms. Samara** (Jordan), having endorsed the statement made by Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that her Government, which firmly condemned all discrimination against women, had established a national programme of action which aimed to make equal opportunities a reality and women the partners, on an equal footing, of men in the development process. Equality of all citizens before the law was enshrined in the Jordanian Constitution. While certain practices based on the principle of the inferiority of one sex were to be deplored in certain societies, the likelihood was that they could be attributed to legal gaps in the constitutions of the countries concerned.

65. Measures had been taken at the national level with a view to reinforcing and promoting the role of women and a national institutional microcredit programme aimed at women living in rural areas had been adopted. Her Government had also established specialized centres and launched projects with a view to building the capacity and skills of women in all spheres and encouraging their greater participation in political, economic and social life. In general, Jordan encouraged women to play a full role in society, assume positions of responsibility, in rural and urban councils as well as in ministries, and run in parliamentary, national and local elections. Preparations were under way for Jordan to host the second summit conference of Arab first ladies in Amman at the start of November 2002.

66. Her delegation expressed grave concern with regard to the situation of Palestinian women and appealed to the international community to help the two parties concerned to return to the negotiating table so that peace and security could be established for the benefit of all the peoples of the region.

67. **Ms. Maguire** (Holy See), recalling all the decisions adopted at the various summit meetings and conferences held since the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, said that it was time to turn words into action. She reiterated that the key elements of the Beijing Platform for Action had always formed part of the social teaching of the Holy See, which reached out to all women, in particular the most vulnerable and underprivileged, and took concrete action on the ground through Catholic institutions. However, the world had evolved since the Beijing Conference had been held. Recent United Nations global conferences had not only helped set goals but had also focused the attention of the international community on those aspects of the protection of human rights and

promotion of development that still needed to be realized.

68. The advancement of women was achieved, above all, by recognizing the dignity of the human person, especially women and girls. Sustainable development was inconceivable without recognition of the inherent dignity of women and, particularly, their special contribution to the family and society. Once that principle was recognized, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls must be promoted and protected and their access to basic social services such as education, health care, clean water and safe sanitation, which were the cornerstones of holistic development, guaranteed.

69. **Mr. Paiva** (International Organization for Migration), referring to agenda item 102, said that in the previous decade, one of the most troubling growth trends in international migration had been trafficking in human beings, in particular the traffic in women. IOM had made the fight against trafficking one of the pillars of its work, and was collaborating with various United Nations bodies in that regard.

70. The approach taken by IOM was twofold. With regard to prevention, IOM carried out research on the causes and manifestations of trafficking, as well as on the different methods and routes used by traffickers. He drew attention to IOM publications on trafficking, in particular regarding the European Conference on Preventing and Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings, as well as to the IOM web site. IOM was, in addition, conducting public information campaigns with a view to alerting women in countries of origin, in particular Central and Eastern Europe, South-East Asia and Latin America, to the dangers they faced. It was also carrying out campaigns in countries of destination, for example in the Balkans, which aimed to raise awareness among persons likely to come into contact with women victims of trafficking. It was clearly vital, however, for States to coordinate their efforts to strengthen measures against traffickers.

71. The second element of the IOM strategy focused on providing assistance to victims. That took the form of protecting victims through the provision of lodging, medical attention, and help in returning home and reintegrating. That work was carried out with the assistance of many people at all levels. Since it was related to the protection of fundamental rights and affected, in one way or another, nearly every country in the world, trafficking in women could only be resolved through international dialogue and cooperation. In that regard, IOM was heartened that many Governments had signed the Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and looked forward to its early entry into force.

72. **Ms. Lewis** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that ILO was endeavouring to promote gender equality in the workplace, but was well aware that women suffered from discriminatory practices throughout their lives: 60 per cent of children who did not attend school and many of the 250 million child labourers between the ages of 5 and 14 were girls; 70 million young people were searching for work, but young women, who had fewer skills, were less likely to be hired than young men. Adult women had to combine career, marriage and family, and were promoted less often and paid less than men, and since women were responsible for caregiving, they were less likely to have adequate social protection in old age.

73. To promote employment growth and contribute to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, ILO had launched an international programme to assist countries in developing national action plans for the employment of women within the context of their poverty eradication strategies. It encouraged them to ratify and implement Convention No. 100 on Equal Remuneration and Convention No. 111 on Discrimination, and to formulate policies for the creation of job opportunities for women in micro and small enterprises and cooperatives.

74. Although providing economic opportunities to women was one way of reducing the feminization of poverty, globalization, the growing flexibility of labour markets and the precariousness of jobs posed new challenges. Subcontracting, and work in the informal sector, were examples.

75. ILO was committed to the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, proposed by the Secretary-General, which was helping Governments to improve access to quality education for girls and women as an urgent priority. Education was a major tool for the elimination of child labour and trafficking in women and girls; ILO was carrying out a number of programmes designed to tackle those serious problems.

76. ILO was also continuing to promote gender equality within trade unions, and had taken part in the preparatory process for the World Summit on the

Information Society, to ensure that women would have their place in that society. ILO had also produced tools for Governments, employers and workers to enable women to play their role in crisis and post-conflict resolution.

77. ILO was doing its utmost to ensure gender mainstreaming in its programming. The audit conducted from October 2001 to April 2002 had shown that the results attained thus far were satisfactory, even though the final report published in May 2002 noted that most flagship publications and key documents were gender blind.

78. Access to productive and freely chosen employment was a basic human right and an essential prerequisite for the elimination of poverty. The Beijing Platform for Action provided a framework for translating those rights into action, and ILO would continue to assist in its implementation.

79. **Mr. Gospodinov** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that for an organization with 97 million members and volunteers and some 300,000 staff, gender was a permanent issue of concern both internally and externally. National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies ensured that all their programmes benefited both men and women, according to their specific needs. The Federation was developing tools and mechanisms to enable gender to be mainstreamed into its programmes and activities. It had, for instance, just developed a new CD-ROM on training in gender issues, which complemented the CD-ROM on gender and humanitarian response. It was endeavouring to adapt those tools to the realities of diverse regions, and had developed a specific training manual for South America.

80. The situation of women within the Federation and the wider issue of gender should also be seen in the broader perspective of diversity. In that regard, the Federation had undertaken a major process of institutional reorientation. The work of the Federation would be of special relevance to Governments and to other international organizations.

81. The advancement of women and the implementation of decisions made by the international community were linked with respect for human dignity. The Plan of Action adopted at the twenty-seventh International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies expressed that goal in terms of fostering initiatives which took into consideration the cultural, religious and other diversity of communities, and sought to protect life and health and ensure respect for every human being. The regional conferences to be held in 2003 would take up those essential questions.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.